



News Release

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SBA Names 2006 North Carolina Small Business Person Of The Year

CHARLOTTE – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Sepideh “Sepi” Asefnia, President of Raleigh-based SEPI Engineering Group, Inc., the North Carolina Small Business Person of the Year for 2006. Sepi was nominated by Patty Briguglio of MMI Associates, Inc. in Raleigh.

Small Business Person of the Year winners from 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam will converge on Washington, D.C. April 12-13, 2006 to mark the annual celebration of National Small Business Week. One of them will be selected as *National Small Business Person of the Year*.

Criteria for the award include: Staying power – a substantiated history as an established business, growth in number of employees, and innovativeness of product/service offered and response to adversity. SEPI Engineering Group was established in 2001 with three employees. The firm currently employs 48.

Born in Tehran, Iran, Sepi was the youngest of three children. At the age of 15 Sepi’s family was divided when her parents sent her, her brother and her sister to the United States to pursue their dreams and to attend college. Sepi graduated from North Carolina State University and worked for the NC Department of Transportation, then put in four years as a highway department manager with a private engineering firm.

Sepi has created an outstanding reputation in an industry where women-owned firms are few and far between. Sepi is a clear example of a woman-owned engineering firm provides its clients with services equal to those of other companies. Sepi credits her success to defining her vision early, doing her research thoroughly, and networking.

In 2003, she contacted the North Carolina Small Business & Technology Development Center (SBTDC) and took advantage of the SBTDC’s counseling specialties. The firm received an extensive business plan review. Three counselors in the Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAC), provided guidance to help the firm obtain contracts with the U.S. General Services Administration, and other federal and state and procurement opportunities. In 2005, SEPI Engineering entered the SBA’s 8(a) and Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Programs.

Sepi was named one of Business Leader Magazine’s Top 10 Women Extraordinaire 2005 and listed in the 2004 Triangle Business Journal’s “Top 25 Women Business Owners in the Triangle.” She is involved in several civic organizations: American Counsel of Engineering Companies of North Carolina (ACEC), Raleigh Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, American Association of State Highway Engineers (ASHE), National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE).

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